

GHANNE seide I thus: I acorde me gretly to Plato, for thou remembrest & recordest me these things yit the secounde tyme; that is to seyn, first whan I loste my memorie by the contagious conjunccion of the body with the sowle; & eftsones afterward, whan I loste it, confounded by the charge and by the burdene of my sorwe.

AND thanne seide she thus: yif thou loke, quod she, first the thinges that thou hast graunted, it ne shal nat ben right fer that thou ne shalt remembre thilke thing that thou seydest that thou nistest nat. What thing? quod I. By whiche government, quod she, that this world is governed. Me remembreth it wel, quod I; and I confesse wel that I ne wiste it naught. But albe it so that I see now from afer what thou purposest, algates, I desire yit to herkene it of thee more pleyntly. Thou ne wendest nat, quod she, a litel herbiform, that men sholden doute that this world nis governed by God.

CERTES, quod I, ne yit ne doute I it naught, ne I nel never wene that it were to doute; as who seith, but I wot wel that God governeth this world; & I shal shortly answeren thee by what resouns I am brought to this. This world, quod I, of so manye dyverse & contrarious parties, ne mighte never han ben assembled in o forme, but yif ther nere oon that conjoinede so manye dyverse thinges; and the same dyversitee of hir natures, that so discorden that oon fro that other, moste departen and unjoignen the thinges that ben conjoined, yif ther ne were oon that contenede that he hath conjoined and ybounde. Ne the certain ordre of nature ne sholde nat bringe forth so ordene moevinges, by places, by tymes, by doinges, by spaces, by qualitees, yif ther ne were oon that were ay stedefast dwellinge, that ordeynede and disponede these dyversitees of moevinges. And thilke thing, whatsoever it be, by which that alle thinges ben ymaked and ylad, I clepe him God; that is a word that is used to alle folk.

GHANNE seyde she: sin thou felest thus these thinges, quod she, I trowe that I have litel more to done that thou, mighty of welefulnesse, hool and sounde, ne see eftsones thy contree. But lat us loken the thinges that we han purposed herbiform. Have I nat noumbred and

seyd, quod she, that suffisaunce is in blisfulnesse, and we han accorded that God is thilke same blisfulnesse? Yis, forsothe, quod I. And that, to governe this world, quod she, ne shal he never han nede of help fro withoute? For elles, yif he hadde nede of any help, he ne sholde nat have no ful suffisaunce? Yis, thus it mot nedes be, quod I. Thanne ordeineth he by himself alone alle thinges? quod she. That may nat be denyed, quod I. And I have remembreth me wel, quod I.

GHANNE ordeineth he alle thinges by thilke good, quod she; sin he good, governeth alle thinges by himself; and he is as a keye & a stere by which that the edifice of this world is ykept stable & withoute coroumpinge.

ACCORDE me gretly, quod I; and I apercevede a litel herbiform that thou woldest seye thus; albe it so that it were by a thinne suspicioun.

ITROWE it wel, quod she; for, as I trowe, thou ledest now more entyly thyne eyen to loken the verray goodes. But natheles the thing that I shal telle thee yit ne sheweth nat lasse to loken. What is that? quod I.

SO as men trowen, quod she, and that rightfully, that God governeth alle thinges by the keye of his goodnesse, & alle these same thinges, as I have taught thee, hasten hem by naturel entencioun to comen to good: ther may no man douten that they ne be governed voluntarily, and that they ne converten hem of hir owne wil to the wil of hir ordenour, as they that ben acordinge and enclynyng to hir governour and hir king. It mot nedes be so, quod I; for the reaume ne sholde nat semen blisful yif ther were a yok of misdrawinges in dyverse parties; ne the savinge of obedient thinges ne sholde nat be. Thanne is ther nothing, quod she, that kepeth his nature, that enforceth him to goon ayein God? No, quod I.

AND yif that anything enforcede him to withstonde God, mighte it availen at the laste ayeins him, that we han graunted to ben almighty by the right of blisfulnesse? Certes, quod I, aloutrely it ne mighte nat availen him. Thanne is ther nothing, quod she, that either wole or may withstonden to this sovereign good? I trowe nat, quod I. Thanne is thilke the sovereign good, quod she, that alle thinges governeth strongly, and ordeyneth hem softly.

GHANNE seyde I thus: I delyte me, quod I, nat only in the endes or in the somme of the resouns that thou hast

concluded and prooved, but thilke wordes that thou usest delysten me moche more; so, at the laste, foolles that sumtyme renge grete thinges oughten ben ashamed of themselves; that is to seyn, that we foolles that reprehenden wikkedly the thinges that touchen Goddes governaunce, we oughten ben ashamed of ourself: as I, that seyde that God refuseth only the werkis of men, and ne entremeteth nat of hem.

THOU hast wel herd, quod she, the fables of the poetes, how the giants assailed the hevne with the goddes; but forsothe, the debonair force of God deposede hem, as it was worthy; that is to seyn, destroyed the giants, as it was worthy. But wilt thou that we joignen togider thilke same resouns? For peraventure, of swich conjunccion may sterten up som fair sparkle of sooth. Do, quod I, as thee liste. Wenest thou, quod she, that God ne be almighty? No man is in doute of it. Certes, quod I, no might ne douteth it, yif he be in his minde. But he, quod she, that is almighty, ther nis nothing that he ne may. That is sooth, quod I. May God don yvel? quod she. Nay, forsothe, quod I. Thanne is yvel nothing, quod she, sin that he ne may nat don yvel that may don alle thinges.

CORNEST thou me? quod I; or elles pleyest thou or deceivest thou me, that hast so woven me with thy resouns the hous of Dedalus, so entrelaced that it is unable to be unlaced; thou that otherwhyle entrest ther thou issest, and otherwhyle issest ther thou entrest, and foldest thou nat togider, by replicacioun of wordes, a maner wonderful cercle or environinge of the simplicitee devyne? For certes, a litel herbiform, whan thou bigunne at blisfulnesse, thou seydest that it is sovereign good; and seydest that it is set in sovereign God; and seydest that God himself is sovereign good; and that God is the fulle blisfulnesse; for which thou yave me as a covenable yift, that is to seyn, that no might nis blisful but yif he be God also therwith. And seidest eek, that the forme of good is the substaunce of God and of blisfulnesse; & seidest, that thilke same con is thilke same good, that is required & desired of alle the kinde of thinges. And thou proovedest, in disputinge, that God governeth alle the thinges of the world by the governments of bountee, and seydest, that alle thinges wolen obeyen to him; and seydest, that the nature of yvel nis nothing. And these thinges ne shewedest thou nat with none resouns ytaken fro withoute, but by prooves in cercles & hoomlich knowen; the whiche prooves drawn to himself hir feith and hir acord, everich of

hem of other.

GHANNE seyde she thus: I ne scorn the nat, ne pleye, ne deceive thee; but I have shewed thee the thing that is grettest over alle thinges by the yift of God, that we whylom preyeden. For this is the forme of the devyne substaunce, that is swich that it ne slydeth nat into outterest foreine thinges, ne ne receiveth no straunge thinges in him; but right as Parmenides seyde in Greek of thilke devyne substaunce; he seyde thus: that Thilke devyne substaunce torneth the world and the moevable cercle of thinges, whyl thilke devyne substaunce kepeth itself withoute moevinge; that is to seyn, that it ne moeveth nevermo, and yit it moeveth alle othere thinges. But natheles, yif I have stired resouns that ne ben nat taken fro withoute the compas of thing of which we treten, but resouns that ben bistowed within that compas, ther nis nat why that thou sholdest mervellen; sin thou hast lerned by the sentence of Plato, that Nedes the wordes moten be cosines to the thinges of which they spoken.

Metre XII.

Felix, qui potuit boni.

ISFUL is that man that may seen the clere welle of good; blisful is he that may unbinden him fro the bondes of the hevvy erthe. The poete of Trace, Orpheus, that whylom hadde right greet sorwe for the deeth of his wyf, after that he hadde maked, by his weeply songes, the wodes, moevable, to rennen; and hadde maked the riveres to stonden stille; & hadde maked the hertes and the bindes to joignen, dredeles, hir sydes to cruel lyouns, for to herkennen his songe; & hadde maked that the hare was nat agast of the hounde, which that was plesed by his songe: so, whan the moste ardaunt love of his wif brende the entrailes of his brest, ne the songes that hadden overcomen alle thinges ne mighten nat aswagen hir lord Orpheus, he pleynde him of the hevne goddes that weren cruel to him; he went him to the houses of helle. And there he temprede his blaundisshinge songes by resowninge strenges, and spak and song in wepinge al that ever he hadde received and laved out of the noble welles of his moder Calliope the goddesse; and he song with as moche as he mighte of wepinge, and with as moche as love, that doublede his sorwe, mighte yeve him and techen him; and he commoevede the helle, & requered & bisoughte by swete preyere the lordes of sowles in helle, of releasinge; that is to seyn, to yilden him his wyf.